Caesar Rodney School District
Citizen Budget Oversight Committee Meeting
Meeting Minutes
5:00 p.m. at the District Office
June 23, 2026

I. Opening

A. Call to Order

B. Roll Call – Scott Kessel, Melissa Rapp, Nicole Hill, Chris Collins, Julie Lavender, Tabitha Myers, and Shannon Wolfe. Also in attendance were Meaghan Brennan, Director of Finance, and Nicole Polite, Supervisor of Finance, representing the Caesar Rodney School District (CRSD).

C. Review of April 29, 2026 Meeting Minutes

II. Discussion Items

Mrs. Brennan provided a presentation on the district's current financial position and FY2027 budget planning. She shared budget reserve increased by $1.5 million, bringing the total reserve to $7.5 million. A $450,000 set-aside was also established using carryover funds for anticipated future expenses, including the phone system, Chromebooks, facilities maintenance including turf fields, and curriculum. Any use of these set-aside funds would require Board action.

A. Tax Rates – FY2027

Tax rates were reviewed, with the total rate increasing by $0.0922, which represents the amount approved through the referendum. Increases were also noted for debt service, tuition, and opportunity funds. Mrs. Brennan explained that budget areas associated with personnel positions will likely continue to increase in future years due to salary increases and rising benefit costs. Assessed property values increased only 0.87% from June 2025 to June 2026.

B. Preliminary Budget – FY2027

The FY2027 preliminary budget was presented in June, with the final budget expected to be completed in December. Mrs. Brennan discussed the district's meetings with the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) to negotiate and justify the unit count guarantee, noting that the number of units affects salaries and other budget factors. In recent years, Caesar Rodney has had to return a portion of the approximately $26 million all other cost appropriation. Consolidated grants were included in the preliminary budget but are expected to decrease in the final budget based on current estimates. Fiscal Year

2027 is also the second year of the DoDEA contract. Local salary expenditures increased as a result of completed negotiations, and expenditures also increased for "IEP days," when substitutes are used to provide staff with time to complete IEPs.

Additional budget changes discussed included an approximately $50,000 increase in insurance costs and the implementation of a paperless process through Droplet. Operations and utility expenditures increased by approximately $700,000. MRS. BRENNAN also shared information about the district's energy challenge, in which schools that reduce energy usage may receive a pizza party and $5,000 in facility funds.

Inclusive education expenditures increased due to contracted PT, OT, and Speech services. CREA tuition reimbursement increased from $75,000 to $80,000. Transportation costs were also discussed. Mrs. Brennan reported that Hilton is going out of business, requiring the district to acquire approximately 30 buses. DOE has been supportive as transportation companies have gone out of business. As the district takes on additional buses, additional operational responsibilities and costs will also be incurred. The district currently has a posting for an additional mechanic and has purchased additional lifts.

The district is also experiencing increased copier costs associated with the renewal of 27 copiers. Safety and security funding is being finalized for the remaining two schools to receive interior cameras. Badge readers are being installed at Caesar Rodney High School, McIlvaine Early Childhood Center, Postlethwait Middle School, and Fifer Middle School. Safety and security funding will be established as a separate line in the budget. Mrs. Brennan also reviewed several one-time FY2027 budget items, including funding for additional buses, school improvement and professional development support at Star Hill Elementary and Postlethwait Middle School, and the Frozen performance at Caesar Rodney High School. The CRHS athletics budget will also increase due to a 46% DIAA increase and higher officials' costs.

C. Referendum Update

Mrs. Brennan reported that collective bargaining negotiations have been completed. CREA reached a four-year contract, with negotiations being completed in one day. The custodial unit maintained its two-year contract and added an MOU providing for increased pay. Secretaries received a three-year contract, while skilled craftsmen received a one-year contract. Mrs. Brennan explained that having different contract expiration dates will hopefully allow the district to take a more phased approach to future negotiations. Mrs. Brennan also met with the technology team, whose salary increase was approved by the Board in June.

D. May Monthly Financial Report review

The May monthly financial report was reviewed. Utilities were approximately $212,000 overspent, and it is anticipated that utilities may be the only deficit at year-end. The district is still awaiting tax collections related to senior and disabled property tax and

expects to receive approximately $250,000. Revenue included approximately $4 million in additional funding for salaries, State transportation, and the DAFB contract. Local funds also increased by approximately $1.2 million, primarily related to the cafeteria, and there was a $9,000 federal revenue adjustment. Overall, Mrs. Brennan reported that the district remains in a good financial position.

Mrs. Wolfe raised a question regarding Chromebook fees, noting that Fifer Middle School had been collecting these fees and asking whether the practice could be implemented more consistently across the district. Mrs. Brennan shared that the district received approximately $7,500 in Chromebook fees during FY2026 but acknowledged that collection of these fees has not historically been a focus across all schools. Some schools have been more successful in collecting the fees. It was noted that the district cannot withhold diplomas for unpaid fees but may be able to restrict participation in extracurricular activities and access to library books. The group discussed whether there may be an opportunity for a more consistent districtwide approach. Mrs. Hill noted that the former student information system displayed an indication when a student had an outstanding balance, which is not currently displayed in Infinite Campus.

Mrs. Wolfe also asked about use of the Caesar Rodney High School auditorium when custodial employees do not want to work an event and whether students could clean the facility afterward. Mrs. Brennan explained that the custodial CBA does not allow the district to take work away from custodial employees. Mrs. Brennan also discussed the current facility rental process, noting that the rental form can be cumbersome and that most groups do not have to pay rental fees.

The group discussed athletic transportation. Mrs. Wolfe asked whether coaches could obtain bus licenses and drive district buses. Mrs. Brennan explained that some coaches currently do so and are paid the driver rate while driving and EPER for the associated game. Mrs. Hill asked whether Transportation hires drivers specifically for athletics. Mrs. Brennan confirmed that Transportation has several part-time drivers, including one driver who handles longer trips.

Mrs. Brennan provided an update on capital planning and shared that the Bond Bill was scheduled to meet that evening. The district is working to draft Certificates of Necessity (CNs) for submission, and future capital planning will likely become a standing Board agenda item. Ms. Rapp asked whether highlighting the district's capacity concerns would assist with securing additional State funding. Mrs. Brennan and Dr. Miklus previously met with all Caesar Rodney legislators in April to discuss the costs associated with transportation. Mrs. Brennan noted that the population at John S. Charlton School has doubled over the past five years.

Ms. Rapp asked whether the district should consider engaging the news media to highlight the need for increased funding. Mrs. Brennan explained that if 2028 CNs are approved, legislative approval would not occur until June 2027, and a new school could take approximately five years to construct. Mrs. Brennan noted that a new JSC facility would serve students from throughout Kent County and benefit legislators across the

county. Mrs. Wolfe added that students attending JSC typically remain there for an extended period. Mrs. Myers asked how legislators responded to the district's discussions. Mrs. Brennan shared that the conversations included safety concerns in front of Star Hill Elementary, overcrowding at Caesar Rodney High School, and the need for a new JSC facility. Mrs. Brennan noted that the estimated cost has increased from approximately $1.9 million last year to approximately $2.5 million currently. The district also requested CTF funding; however, CTF funds were already committed to larger projects.

Mrs. Hill highlighted the possibility of sharing the Clover/GoDE presentation at the upcoming administrative retreat. Ms. Rapp asked whether a similar presentation could be provided to advisors and coaches.

Mrs. Brennan will send potential meeting dates for the next meeting in September.

III. Adjournment